

2 Samuel 19:9-43

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[0 : 00] tonight. We're going to look at the end of 2 Samuel 19. That's page 271 in the Pew Bible. If you want to turn there, that'll be helpful.

We'll kind of walk through this text together and see what God has for us here to learn tonight. Last week, Greg preached on 2 Samuel 18 and in the beginning of 19 where David mourned the death of Absalom. Tonight, we're going to look at the rest of that chapter. And what's going on in this chapter is this is 2 Samuel's account of David's return to Jerusalem after Absalom's rebellion has come to an end.

In other words, David, the rightful king is coming home in this text. And the big question that's looming at this point in Israel's history is this. How will David restore unity and peace to the kingdom?

How's he going to do that? The king of Israel, after all, was supposed to unify the nation of Israel in the praise of God. And actually, through Israel, the king was really supposed to unify and eventually unite all nations in the praise of God.

But right now, at this point in the story, as we'll see in a second, David is not coming home to peace. He's coming home to a fragile and fractured and fearful people who are on the brink of chaos.

[1 : 35] My wife and I, as some of you know, have three young kids. And when I come home after work, when I come home, what I often find waiting for me when I step through the door is not peace, but chaos.

The kids have been playing all day, so their toys are strewn all around the house. Dinner is cooking. Someone's crying. In short, the Lauer household around 5.15 p.m. is nuts.

And my wife, Beth, she is very awesome. She's great with the kids. But, you know, I think anybody at the end of the day, you know, those three kids at the end of the day, they are just toast. They're ready to unravel.

Of course, I would love for my kids to welcome me at the door and say, Oh, Daddy dearest, welcome home.

We're so glad to see you. Look at how I've cleaned up all my toys and made all things ready for your arrival. Come, let me hand you your slippers. Take this warm cup of tea. Here's the newspaper.

[2 : 36] I shall not bother you until it be dinner time, Father. That, of course, is not how it goes. Isn't it the case that the fallen world that we live in does not naturally tend towards peace and wholeness?

It tends towards fragmentation and chaos. I think that is a great sign of the fact that things are not the way they're supposed to be in our world. And David, when he returns, the kingdom is not stable and peaceful and unified.

It's fragile and it's on the verge of chaos. So let's jump into this text. Let's read the first two paragraphs and let's see how David goes about making peace in this situation.

End of verse 8. Now Israel. Now Israel had fled every man to his own home. Israel here refers to the northern tribes of Israel in the rest of this narrative.

And they've fled to their homes because their army backing Absalom has just been crushed by David's army. So they've fled every man to his home. And all the people were arguing throughout all the tribes of Israel saying the king delivered us from the hand of our enemies and saved us from the hand of the Philistines and now he has fled out of the land from Absalom.

[3 : 51] But Absalom, who we anointed over us, is dead in battle. Now therefore, why do you say nothing about bringing the king back? You could hear them sort of arguing with one another.

And King David sent this message to Zadok and Abiathar the priests. Say to the elders of Judah, these are the southern, this is the southern tribe, why should you be the last to bring the king back to his house when the word of all Israel has come to the king?

David apparently has gotten word that the northern tribes are ready to bring him home. You are my brothers. You're my bone and my flesh. Why then should you be the last to bring back the king?

And say to Amasa, are you not my bone and my flesh?

God, do so to me and more also if you are not commander of my army from now on in place of Joab. And he, that is David, swayed the heart of all the men of Judah as one man so that they sent word to the king, return both you and all your servants.

So the king came back to the Jordan and Judah came to Gilgal to meet the king and to bring him over to the Jordan. Okay, let's pause there. So we see the situation here. The people are scared.

[5 : 01] They're arguing as people who are scared often do. Some are obviously worried that if David comes back he'll punish them for rebelling. Others are probably thinking that if they don't welcome him back it will get even worse for them and they don't know what to do.

And if you think about it on a broader sort of political level, the nation's in a pretty dangerous place right now. They're fragmented. They're alienated from their king who was basically the military leader at that time.

They're in the aftermath of a civil war. This is just the sort of thing that an Egypt or Assyria or the Philistine armies would love to just come rumbling into Israelite territory and take advantage of their weakened condition.

They're in a dangerous spot. And even Judah, David's own tribe here, is uncertain of what to do. They too, remember, went over to Absalom.

But David here, not wanting the nation to be fractured, wanting them to be unified, appeals to Judah for them not to be left out or left behind when he returns to Jerusalem.

[6 : 03] Why should you be the last to welcome me back? Aren't we bone of bone and flesh of flesh? And then David does something really surprising. As a sign of what they can expect when he comes home, what does he do?

He makes a guy named Amasa the head of his army in the place of Joab. Now, you're thinking, who the heck is Amasa? What is that? What difference does that make?

Well, Amasa, remember, was just recently the head of Absalom's army. This was the opposing general on the other side of the civil war.

These were the guys David was just fighting against, the ones who just staged a coup and tried to kill him. He says, look, I'm going to extend an olive branch. Amasa is general now in the place of Joab.

David's not going to enact revenge. He's going to work to rebuild the nation, even if that means demoting his long-standing general, Joab, and putting Amasa in his place.

[7 : 07] Okay, now this, these paragraphs are pretty introductory, actually. This kind of sets up the rest of the chapter and what's going to happen. On his way back to the Jordan and back to Jerusalem, David is going to have three encounters that sort of encapsulate or give a concrete picture of how David is going to try to restore peace to the nation, how he's going to try to be a peacemaker in the midst of this really fragile and fractious situation.

And he's going to do two things. On the one hand, he's going to show mercy to his enemies, and on the other hand, he's going to show kindness and loyalty to his friends. And what the narrator of 2 Samuel is trying to show us here, he's trying to show us that this is what a real king looks like.

Not someone who's power hungry, not someone who's vengeful, not someone who's self-serving. No. A real king is a peacemaker who's willing to extend mercy to his enemies and maintain loyalty with his friends.

So we're going to see three episodes. Two of them are episodes of mercy and one of them loyalty to friends. So let's look at the first episode in 16. Verse 16. And Shimea, the son of Gerah, the Benjaminite from Baharim, hurried to come down with the men of Judah to meet King David.

And with him were a thousand men from Benjamin. And Ziba, the servant of the house of Saul, with his 15 sons and his 20 servants, rushed down to the Jordan before the king. And they crossed the ford to bring over the king's household and to do his pleasure.

[8 : 44] And Shimea, the son of Gerah, fell down before the king as he was about to cross the Jordan. And he said to the king, let not my lord hold me guilty or remember how your servant did wrong on the day my lord the king left Jerusalem.

Do not let the king take it to heart for your servant knows that I have sinned. Therefore behold, I have come this day the first of all the house of Joseph to come down to meet my lord the king. Abishai, the son of Zeruah, answered, shall not Shimea be put to death for this because he cursed the lord's anointed?

But David said, what have I to do with you, you sons of Zeruah, that you should this day be an adversary to me? Shall anyone be put to death in Israel this day?

For do I not know that I am this day king over Israel? And the king said to Shimea, you shall not die. And the king gave him his oath. Okay, so you'll remember this guy, Shimei, or Shimea, or however you pronounce it, however you want to pronounce it.

You'll remember this guy from chapter 16, right? This is the guy who when David was running away from Absalom on his way out of the city showed up and just started cursing him and casting dirt on his head and calling him a ruthless, bloody man and said, you're getting what you deserve, David.

[9 : 57] And now that it looks like David is still going to be king after all, lo and behold, here comes Shimei as fast as he can to ask for forgiveness. Did you notice how the narrator said he hurried down to the Jordan and then he didn't just wait there for David to cross the Jordan, he went over the Jordan to get to David as quickly as he possibly could.

And he asks for forgiveness. And Abishai, one of David's soldiers, gives David the same advice that he gave to David back in chapter 16. Do you remember that?

Abishai said in chapter 16, David, I've got an easy solution here. Let's just take this guy's head off. Done. And Abishai is sort of like, you know, he's kind of a one-track-minded guy. He's like, hey, here's another opportunity, David. He's back.

Let's kill him. But David again doesn't listen to Abishai. And instead, what does David do? He refrains from executing harsh judgment and he grants Shimei mercy.

Now, was Shimei guilty? Of course. He cursed David up one side and down the other on his way out of Jerusalem. Was Shimei's repentance and apology sincere here in chapter 19?

[11 : 14] I mean, he sincerely wanted to save his own skin. That's for sure. Right? And if David had lost the war with Absalom, one wonders whether Shimei would have been so contrite. So I think we can question whether he's really that sincere here.

But for all that, David still extends mercy. He keeps his cool and he acts with prudence for the sake of making peace in the nation.

Now, I don't know about you, but I think of just how rare that kind of thing is. If you and I are given the chance to prove someone wrong or to make someone pay for wronging us, I mean, we often do it, don't we?

And yet, David refrains. He affirms that what Shimei did was wrong, but at least for now he doesn't make him pay. And you have to ask, what is it that allows David to respond that way?

How is he, I mean, he has every right, all the authority, certainly all the power at this moment to do exactly what his young friend is telling him to do.

[12 : 23] And yet, what allows David not to respond that way? Look again at the end of verse 21. For do I not know that I am this day king over Israel?

What is David saying there? In other words, David is saying that he doesn't have to prove himself in this moment. And he doesn't have to send a message to his enemies and he doesn't have to nurse his wounded pride.

He tells his young friend, look, I know I am the king right now and I don't need to do anything to prove it. He is so certain and so secure in that fact that he extends mercy to this guy.

And he knows that as the king, there is a bigger job to do than just evening the score and making this guy pay for what he did. David, you see, has got this bigger agenda and he wants there to be peace and wholeness and unity in the people of God.

And for that end, he extends this guy mercy. And friends, I think the same will be true of us. As you and I grow, in our assurance of our identity, not obviously as God's king, but certainly as God's children, as you and I become more and more assured of the fact that God knows us and loves us and has chosen us in Christ, the more and more we will have a deep wellspring to pull from and the more and more we'll find that our lives are caught up in a much bigger agenda than just getting even with the people who happen to cross us.

[14 : 06] In other words, I think as we sort of root ourselves in our identity of who God has made us to be in Christ, we actually get the power to become peacemakers and extend mercy the way David did.

Well, let's look at the next meeting that David has where he again extends mercy, but this time it looks a little different. Pick up the story in verse 24. The narrator says, And Mephibosheth, the son of Saul, came down to meet the king.

He had neither taken care of his feet nor trimmed his beard nor washed his clothes from the day the king departed until the day he came back in safety. And when he came to Jerusalem to meet the king, the king said to him, Why did you not go with me, Mephibosheth?

He answered, My lord, O king, my servant deceived me. For your servant said to him, I will saddle a donkey for myself that I may ride on it and go with the king. For your servant is lame. He, that is Ziba, has slandered your servant to my lord the king.

But my lord the king is like the angel of God. Do therefore what seems good to you. For all my father's house were but men doomed to death before my lord the king, but you set your servant among those who eat at your table.

[15:12] What further right have I then to cry to the king? And the king said to him, Why speak any more of your affairs? I have decided. You and Ziba shall divide the land.

And Mephibosheth said to the king, Oh, let him take it all since my lord the king has come safely home. If you look up before this paragraph in verse 17, we're told that a man named Ziba also came rushing down to the Jordan and crossed over to meet David.

And you'll remember that like Shimei, David was also met by this guy named Ziba as he was fleeing Jerusalem from Absalom. and Ziba in that moment seemed to be a friend to David then.

He gave him food and drink when David was tired and thirsty and hungry on his flight. But in that moment, if you look back there, that chapter, Ziba also sort of says that his master, Mephibosheth, Ziba is the servant of Mephibosheth.

Ziba says, Oh, Mephibosheth, David, he's gone over with Absalom. He's totally abandoned you and betrayed you. And in that moment, David says, okay, Ziba, all of his property is yours. For your loyalty, you get his inheritance.

[16:24] But now, lo and behold, as David is coming back into the land, we get to hear Mephibosheth's side of the story. And David, in some sense, can see Mephibosheth's side of the story right before his eyes because Mephibosheth, the narrator says, is a total wreck.

His feet are dirty, his beard is scraggly, his clothes are dirty. In other words, he's been in mourning, sadness, and grief since David left the nation, since he had to flee.

And because of Mephibosheth's disability, he was lame in both of his feet, he couldn't actually make it out to David in time to go with him. He was stranded. It seems that his servant, Ziba, had betrayed him, kind of left him, and gone out and taken advantage of David while David was on the run.

So, the question is, who's telling the truth? Is it Ziba or is it Mephibosheth? At this point, I mean, David is sort of confronted with a giant he said, she said, right?

Of course, on the surface, it looks like Ziba is guilty. Mephibosheth's story certainly seems more plausible and he kind of looks the part too. But David doesn't rush to any conclusions here.

[17:41] Isn't it interesting that if David showed restraint in the episode right before this with Shimei not putting him to death immediately, David also shows some restraint here by not immediately reinstating Mephibosheth and punishing Ziba.

Instead, David does something again that's very prudent. What does he do? He divides the property 50-50. And it's almost like a test.

Do you remember when Solomon, David's son, first became king? What's one of the first things that Solomon has to do when he's king? Two women come to Solomon and these two women both had children.

One of them died and one of them was alive and they both come to Solomon and say, my child's the alive one and the other child is the dead one. Right? And they're arguing it out. And what's Solomon going to do?

It's a he said, she said kind of thing. So he says, well, you say one thing, you say another, cut the baby in half, and you each get to take one part of it home. And one woman says, great, fine by me, sounds like a good deal.

[18:45] And the other woman says, no, let her have it. And right away, everybody knows who the real mother is. The one who wanted the child to live even if she would lose him.

And I think in some sense when David says, look, let's just cut the property 50-50, we get to see immediately where Mephibosheth's heart is at. Because in essence, what does Mephibosheth say?

He says, you know what, David? Let Ziba have the whole thing. Why? Because if I have you, if you've come home and you're going to reign, then I've got everything I need. I don't need property, livelihood.

I don't need that. You're here. That's what matters. Now pause, let's just pause on that for a minute. Friends, do you want to know whether or not you really get the gospel?

Do you want to know whether you really grasp the heart of what Christianity is all about? So often at the heart level, what we're really saying spiritually is this.

[19 : 56] I'll follow Jesus. I will believe in him as long as that helps me get what I really want. Or, at least, I'll follow him at least if it doesn't get in the way of what I really want.

But you know that you're really starting to get it. You know that your heart is really starting to change. When you start to say, you know, actually, the most important thing in my life isn't whether or not I get this particular thing.

But the most important thing is to have Jesus himself. That's what really matters. To have him reigning in my life, it doesn't matter if I get this, that, or the other thing.

I've got him. In other words, when your heart starts to see not Christ as a means to an end, but himself as the end, that's when you're starting to get it.

When you start to see that being in a relationship with him, that's the greatest thing. And isn't that what Mephibosheth is saying here? David, look, the land is not the thing. You're the thing.

[21 : 05] To sit at your table, to be a part of your family, that's what I care about. So you can give Ziba the property, I don't really care. What I care is to be reconciled to you.

That's the heart that really gets it. Friends, is that you tonight? It's a hard question. Or is something more precious to you than having God himself in Christ?

Are you seeing your relationship with God as just a means to an end? Are you seeing it for what it is, the very end for which you were created? To know him and to love him and to be in fellowship with him.

Is that the most precious thing to you? Let's look at David's last encounter here. And here we see David not dealing with his enemies like Shimei or Ziba, but he's dealing with a friend here.

Let's pick up in verse 31. Now Barzillai, the Gileadite. That's a sweet name by the way. Anyone here expecting? Barzillai.

[22 : 13] Put that one on your short list. That's a good deal. Barzillai, the Gileadite, had come down from Rogalim and he went on with the king to the Jordan to escort him over the Jordan.

Barzillai was a very aged man, 80 years old. He had provided the king food while he stayed at Mahanaim for he was a very wealthy man. And the king said to Barzillai, come over with me and I will provide for you with me in Jerusalem.

But Barzillai said to the king, how many years have I still to live that I should go up with the king to Jerusalem? I am this day 80 years old. Can I discern what is pleasant and what is not?

Can your servant taste what he eats or what he drinks? Can I still listen to the voice of singing men and singing women? Why then should your servant be an added burden to my lord the king? Your servant will go a little way over the Jordan with the king.

Why should the king repay me with such a reward? Please let your servant return that I might die in my own city near the grave of my father and my mother. But here is your servant Kimham.

[23 : 15] Let him go over with my lord the king and do for him whatever seems good to you. And the king answered Kimham shall go over with me and I will do for him whatever seems good to you and all that you desire of me I will do for you.

Then all the people went over the Jordan and the king went over and the king kissed Barzillai and blessed him and he returned to his own home. The king went on to Gilgal and Kimham went with him. So here we see that David doesn't forget the kindness that this man Barzillai showed to him when he was in need.

And when Barzillai refuses to accept David's offer of coming back with him to Jerusalem David doesn't get offended. Instead he finds a way to honor his old friend nonetheless by blessing this young man Kimham in his place.

I think there's a critical actually lesson in this paragraph. Think about David. David is putting out fires left and right isn't he? He's got huge massive problems to deal with.

The nation is on the verge of crumbling and yet he doesn't forget and he doesn't take for granted the friends who actually stood by him when he was in need.

[24 : 32] I think this is a really good reminder. You know it's important to think about how we treat our enemies and we've been seeing how David is an example of prudence and mercy in that regard but friends we also need to think about how we treat our friends.

Think about the people who are close to you who stand by you the people who encourage you and who support you and who are there for you when you need them.

Are you taking them for granted? being a peacemaker being an agent of God's kingdom is just as much about loving our spouses and showing kindness to our fellow church members and being grateful to our friends it's as much about that not taking those people for granted working hard at cultivating those relationships is as much about that as it is about forgiving our enemies.

And notice how David here is not easily deterred his plan A doesn't work Barzillai declines the offer to come to Jerusalem and then what does David do?

Well fine see you later no he gladly goes along with plan B right he'll show kindness to the servant instead bring him along I'll shower blessings on him for your sake in other words David's going to show loyalty and gratitude to his friend and he's going to do it in a way that matters and that counts to him to Barzillai not to David friends when you think about showing kindness to those who are closest to you to really blessing them to really showing them gratitude are you thinking about what would be meaningful for that person or are you doing it sort of according to your own agenda and what you think they should like are you like Homer Simpson who buys Marge Simpson a bowling ball for her birthday oh you're not going to use the bowling ball Marge I'll take it friends we should rather be ultimately concerned about what's going to show that person loyalty and kindness and gratitude and bless them

[26 : 49] Barzillai comes up with this plan here's my servant take this servant boy to Jerusalem and shower blessing on him that would not have been a sexy flashy proposal to David would have been much more great to take this aged old guy to Jerusalem and have him sit at his table and look at how great that is but no David says great Barz life that's what's going to bless you bring him along I'll make him one of my own David's ultimately concerned with what's going to show him that he's grateful for his loyalty and love and I think that's worthy of our imitation but you know friends for all that when we come to the end of this chapter we see something again that's a little surprising David has done his best at this point to repair and restore the nation he's showing mercy to his enemies he's showing kindness to his friends he's being prudent and wise and thoughtful he's being a good king but in the end it doesn't seem to have been enough let's pick up with the rest of verse 40 all the people of

Judah and also half the people of Israel brought the king on his way then all the men of Israel presumably all those who didn't show up came to the king and said to the king why have our brothers the men of Judah stolen you away and brought the king and his household over the Jordan and all David's men with him they're accusing them of going behind their back and bringing David home and not letting them join the party and all the men of Judah answered the men of Israel because the king's our close relative why then are you angry over this matter have we eaten at all at the king's expense or has he given us any gift the implied answer there is no we haven't gotten any profit out of this deal and the men of Israel answered the men of Judah we have ten shares in the king and in David also we have more than you why then do you despise us were we not the first to speak of bringing back our king it was our idea in the first place but the words of the men of Judah were fiercer than the words of the men of Israel end of chapter despite all of David's robust peacemaking activity the nation still descends into pettiness and tribalism and pride and it ends like a shouting match between two kids on the playground except with much more dire consequences because as we'll see in the next chapter as a result of this fracturing a whole other rebellion breaks out and the nation again descends into war with itself so what does it mean friends I think it means that not even great David can finally heal the divisions that tear us apart the chapter ends crying out with the need for an even greater David for an even better king and friends that's what the Bible is all about it's about one who's come to do just that you know when Jesus Christ came to earth one of the things he taught his disciples was this blessed are the peacemakers for they shall be called the sons of God and in some sense that's what we've been thinking about tonight how to be peacemakers but you know at the end of the day

Jesus didn't come just to teach us what we're supposed to do he came to do what we couldn't do he came to extend a mercy and to extend a kindness to such a degree and to such a depth that even the most violent of our divisions can be healed in other words Jesus Christ came

not just to teach peace but to make it definitively once and for all how because you see friends for all of those men and women for everyone who puts their trust in Christ his death on the cross heals the most severe division that any of us ever experience the division that exists between us as sinful human beings and our holy wise and good creator God and as the son of God

Jesus came as our perfect representative fully in the flesh living a life that we should have lived dying a death that we deserve to die dying in our place and then rising again to prove that the penalty for our sins have been paid in full when we trust in him and friends the reality is is that when we come to know the peace of being reconciled to God through grace something that David could never do no human king could reconcile us to God but Jesus can and did once we come to know that reconciling grace the apostle Paul says is that then we're actually reconciled to one another that when the wall between us and God came crashing down the wall between one another came tumbling down with it David did his very best to unite the people around his kingship but it's still broke and it's still splintered but when

[32 : 23] Jesus Christ was exalted on the cross our enmity was finally taken away because before the cross we're all equal no matter what our tribe no matter what our background we're all sinners and we're all recipients of a steadfast love and grace like we could only imagine and that puts everything else in perspective and friends as we the church come to grips with that and grasp that and hold tightly to it in the power of the Holy Spirit you know what happens the church actually becomes this great signpost of the reconciling power of the cross of Jesus his own reconciling power that today as we extend mercy to our enemies as we show kindness to one another and to our friends we're actually telling the world in our life together that there's finally a king that has come who can take away our chaos and give us peace who can heal us and make us one and take away these divisions that just rip us apart and when we're living in that

Jesus says blessed are the peacemakers for they shall be called sons and daughters of God you see may that be true of us let's pray Lord Jesus we thank you that you are the true and better David who has come to unite your people into one to forgive all their sins and to give us a reconciling mission in the world and Lord thank you that you've given us your spirit to dwell permanently in our midst and in each one of us that we might have strength energy power and guidance to do this in the world today so Lord we thank you for your grace we thank you that you've healed the great divisions between us and God and between us and each other we pray Lord that more and more we would come to love and cherish the reconciling work that you've done for us we pray this in your name

Lord amen friends the music team's going to come up we're going to sing one more song together and just meditate on these truths a little more together so let's stand and let's sing and let's pray together thank you